

Maine State Planning Office

Waste Management & Recycling Program



Fact Sheet: Reduction & Recycling Tips for Effective Direct Mail

Americans receive more than 4 million tons - or 60 billion pieces - of direct mail every year. Almost half of that (44%) is never opened or read - it goes right in the trash. As a result, direct mail makes up a significant portion of the municipal solid waste stream. It is often personalized and is highly visible, causing consumer frustration and environmental concern.

Much of what is mailed either cannot be recycled at all or fetches a very low (even negative) market value. Shiny advertisements, plastic windows in envelopes, and nonsoluble glues contaminate what is otherwise high grade paper. Moreover, collection programs are difficult to implement because of the high degree of separation and intensive consumer education required. Most consumers are looking for ways to reduce the amount of direct mail that they receive.

Public concern about the increasing volumes of unwanted mail has caused some direct mail marketers to try to reduce their mailings and find ways to make them more recyclable. Reducing and recycling can also save money by decreasing paper, printing and postage costs.

Waste Reduction

- Use both sides of paper;
- Eliminate use of envelopes by tri-folding letterhead and adhering address labels directly to it;
- Use soy or water based inks for printed materials; these are less toxic than oil-based inks;
- Use returnable mail-back envelopes for surveys or questionnaires;
- Use layout space of promotional material efficiently; condense 2-3 flyers to one sheet of paper
- Weed out duplicate names on mailing lists;
- Provide a response mechanism on your mailings that allows recipients to advise you of duplicate mailings or be removed from your mailing list;
- Subscribe to Mail Preference Service which allows consumers to be removed from subscribers organization's mailing lists (Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008).

Recycling

- Use white paper which has a higher market value than colored paper;
- Use water soluble address labels to enhance recyclability of mailings;
- If using envelopes with plastic windows, be sure to use cellulose or glassine instead of plastic; better yet, use open windows;
- Let recipients know that your mailing is recyclable and encourage them to recycle at local facilities.

Buy Recycled

- Buy recycled paper for stationery, envelopes, and copier paper; look for 100% post-consumer content;
- Add “printed on recycled paper” at the bottom of stationery and mailings;
- Purchase other products with recycled content, such as business cards, computer paper, desk accessories, poster board, cover stock, paper towels, napkins, bath tissues and plastic trash bags.

For more information, please contact:

State Planning Office Waste Management and Recycling Program
State House Station 38 Augusta, Maine 04333-0038 (207) 287-8050 or 1-800-662-4545

or visit us online at: **www.recyclemaine.com**

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